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# Corpus Christi Caller Times



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★ June 23, 2001



**History:** North Padre Island served as a bombing range starting in World War II. Page A13



**Environment:** The proposed training area's pristine beaches provide nesting areas for endangered turtles. Page A13

## Bombing range may move here

### Relocation would aid economy

By JASON MA  
Caller-Times

Bombing South Texas ranchland could bring in more military personnel for temporary training stints and more on-base construction for training facilities, local economic development officials say.

It could increase the number of missions for local military bases, helping to secure their continued future against the next round of base closures.

From ship repairs at the Port of Corpus Christi, to aircraft carriers docking at Naval Station Ingleside, the economic repercussions of the bombing exercises — which often include up to 16 ships, 80 combat planes and 15,000 troops — could reverberate throughout the economy.

The idea to bring the bombing exercises from Vieques, where they have generated a local uprising against the Navy, to South Texas began as a local engineer's idea.

Local economic development officials not only welcomed the idea, they cultivated it.

Pat Veteto, a retired Marine, said he thought of the plan one day while driving through the wide, empty expanse of Kenedy County, population 414, in 1992.

A retired reserve lieutenant colonel, Veteto said he thought the idea would serve the military well.

"Primarily, it would be good for the country," he said.

But locally, economic development advocates say the effect of the facilities would be better for the economy.

And with the possibility of more base closures, a training center would solidify the future of local bases, they add.

"It would make our bases so valuable," said Gary Bushell, a consultant to the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce. "We'd be thinking about what else we could

### Military equipment used in Vieques

**F/A-18C Hornet**  
■ **Type:** Carrier-borne and land-based attack fighter  
■ **Wingspan:** 37 feet, 6 inches  
■ **Empty weight:** 23,832 pounds  
■ **Max level speed:** more than Mach 1.8  
■ **Combat ceiling:** about 50,000 feet

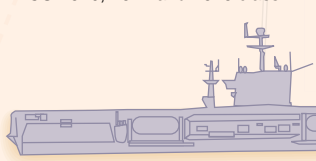


**LCAC1 Landing craft, air cushioned**  
■ **Description:** Air-cushion craft for transporting, ship-to-shore and across the beach, personnel, weapons, equipment, and cargo of the assault elements of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force  
■ **Length:** 87 feet, 11 inches  
■ **Displacement:** 170-182 tons full load



### Landing craft, mechanized and utility - LCM/LCU

■ **Description:** Landing craft are used by amphibious forces to transport equipment and troops to shore  
■ **Features:** Landing craft are capable of transporting tracked or wheeled vehicles and troops from amphibious assault ships to beachheads or piers.  
■ **Length:** 134.9 feet  
■ **Speed:** 11 knots  
\* LCU 1610, 1627 and 1646 class



### Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier

■ **Commissioned:** Oct. 25, 1986  
■ **Displacement:** 96,386 tons fully loaded  
■ **Speed:** 30+ knots  
■ **Fixed-wing aircraft:** Air wing depends on mission and includes up to 20 F-14D Tomcat; 36 F/A-18 Hornet; 4 EA-6B Prowler; 4 E-2C Hawkeye; 6 S-3B Viking; 2 ES-3A Shadow  
■ **Helicopters:** 4 SH-60F and 2 HH-60H Seahawk

### Typical size of a Navy exercise in Vieques

16 Ships      80 Combat planes  
15,000 Troops      130,000 Pounds of bombs

Diagrams not to scale  
Sources: U.S. Census, U.S. Navy, Jane's Fighting Ships, Jane's All The World's Aircraft, Texas Almanac  
Research: Margaret Neu/Caller-Times Information Services Editor

Ashley Ream and John Bruce/Caller-Times

### South Texas could be Bush's Vieques answer

By JEREMY SCHWARTZ AND J.R. GONZALES  
Caller-Times

A huge section of land south of Kingsville is being considered by the Navy as a replacement for the embattled bombing range in Vieques, Puerto Rico, officials said Friday.

"It would be among the possible alternatives," said Lt. Cmdr. Cate Mueller, a Navy spokeswoman.

"The Navy is putting together a panel of people to look very hard at replacing Vieques."

She said the Navy still is in the preliminary stages of finding a site that could replace Vieques by 2003.

The Navy contacted local officials about three years ago seeking information on possible South Texas sites for a bombing range and amphibious landing training area, said Dick Messbarger, executive director of the Greater Kingsville Economic Development Council. On orders of the Navy, the proposed relocation had been kept quiet until Thursday, when an unnamed source close to the White House leaked it to the *Washington Times*.

The *Washington Times* reported in Friday's editions that Karl Rove, President Bush's senior political adviser, canceled a meeting with Pentagon officials Friday in which he was to discuss relocating the range.

The agenda, a source told the *Times*, included a discussion of moving the Puerto Rican Navy bombing range to a South Texas site near Kingsville.

### Bombing option

Earlier this week, President Bush agreed to halt military exercises

Please see RANGE/A12

Also see What leaders say .....A12  
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What do you think about moving the Vieques bombing operation to South Texas?

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metrodesk@caller.com



Neal

"It will create new missions for the bases."



Messbarger

"The technology today is significantly cleaner and safer (than that used in Vieques)."



Hutchison

"My position would depend on the community... and it's premature now..."

### 4 area ships are ordered out of port at Bahrain

By ROBERT BURNS  
Associated Press

In response to a threat against Americans in the Middle East, a Marine Corps training exercise in Jordan is being cut short and Navy ships, including four from Ingleside, have been ordered out of port in Bahrain.

Pentagon officials described the

threat Friday as "nonspecific," meaning it was aimed at Americans but not necessarily against members of the military.

Officials said it was possible the threat was related to Thursday's announcement by the Justice Department of indictments against 13 Saudis and one Lebanese in connection with the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers apartment complex in Saudi

Arabia. Nineteen members of the U.S. Air Force were killed in that attack.

It was not immediately clear whether the source of the new threat was known to U.S. officials.

In response to the threat, several Navy minesweeping ships were ordered out of port in Bahrain, which is headquarters for the U.S. 5th Fleet that patrols the Persian Gulf area.

(About 300 people are serving on

four ships from Naval Station Ingleside that are permanently deployed in Bahrain. Two coastal mine hunters, the USS Cardinal and the USS Raven, and two mine countermeasure ships, the USS Ardent and the USS Dextrous, are using the time to conduct training exercises in the Arabian Gulf, Lt. Marc Boyd, public affairs

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